



# NEWS RELEASE

## IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

1301 N. Orchard St., Boise ID 83706 -- Phone: (208) 327-7900 FAX: (208) 327-7866  
[www.idwr.state.id.us/planpol/watplan/planning/iwrb\\_home.htm](http://www.idwr.state.id.us/planpol/watplan/planning/iwrb_home.htm)

---

Release 2003-28

### **IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD** **SEEKS TO MODIFY PRIEST RIVER BASIN PLAN**

For Immediate Release  
Boise, Idaho – June 2, 2003

For Media Information Contact:  
Dick Larsen - (208) 327-7933

The Idaho Water Resource Board wants to modify its Priest River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan to enhance kokanee salmon restoration by changing the way water is released from Priest Lake, Board officials have announced.

The changes being proposed to the plan would see the lake surface level be lowered at a faster rate starting October 1 until it reaches 0.0 feet at the lake outlet gauge by November 1 of each year, before the Kokanee begin spawning. That's two months earlier than has been the case.

The move would mean flow levels in the lower Priest River of up to 2,500 Cubic Feet Per Second during the fall release period. Flow levels during the release period would be gradually increased by up to 500 CFS per day.

Officials say the move could help restore a Kokanee population that virtually began collapsing in the 1970s until it was functionally extinct by the late 1980s. But in the late 1990s, Kokanee salmon began to return to Priest Lake and have shown signs of improving their numbers.

However, existing lake draw down operations meant the lake level was lowered gradually throughout the fall and winter until it reached the prescribed level of 0.0 feet at the lake outlet by December 31st as required by Idaho law. In the process, Kokanee spawning areas, called redds, along the shoreline were being destroyed because water levels went down after the fish had spawned. Biologists say the Priest Lake Kokanee spawn earlier than stocks in Lakes Pend Oreille and Coeur d'Alene.

-more-more-

Priest River Plan Changes – Page 2 of 2

The public review period for the proposal begins Wednesday (June 4) and runs until August 4. Details of the proposed plan amendments can be viewed on the Internet at the following address: [www.idwr.state.id.us/waterboard/planning/development.htm](http://www.idwr.state.id.us/waterboard/planning/development.htm).

The Board has set a public information meeting on the proposal for June 18 in Priest River when they will meet with the public to talk about the various aspects of the proposal.

Board members will conduct a public hearing on the proposal on the plan June 26 in Sandpoint.

The June 18 public information meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Priest River Junior High School library, 1020 Albeni Highway. The June 26 public hearing will be held at 7:00 p.m. at the Edgewater Motel, 56 Bridge Street in Sandpoint.

Both the public information meeting and the public hearing will be held in a facility that meets accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need assistance to attend, participate in or understand the events please contact Bill Graham, (208) 327-7966, in advance so arrangements can be made.

